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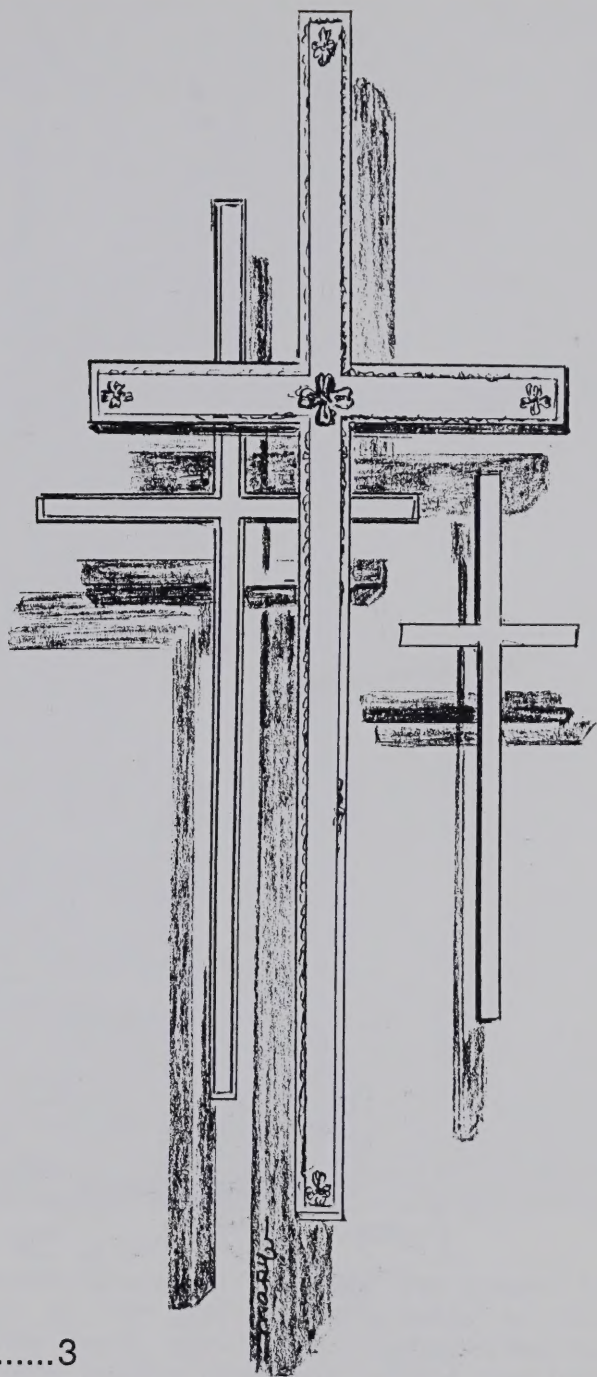
## Years of Faith



### First United Methodist Church

Auburn, Indiana





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# *The Founder*



**THE FIRST** Methodist church in Auburn was the very first church of any kind in the community.

It also was the first courthouse...

and the first jail...

and the local hotel...

all in a cabin just 18-by-20 feet.

Not least of all, this versatile building was the home of Wesley Park, founder of Auburn and what today is known as the Auburn First United Methodist Church.

Park accomplished all those things by his 28th birthday. This book celebrates the 150th birthday of the church he started in 1839.

Park was born Nov. 11, 1811 in Licking County, Ohio, just east of Columbus. He married Sophia Jugman on Jan. 2, 1833. And in the fall of 1835, nearly 24 years old, he set off on a 250-mile journey that would launch Auburn's history.

That autumn, Park and

two other men traveled from Licking County to South Bend, Indiana in a two-horse buggy, seeking new homes in what was known to them as the West.

On their way to South Bend, they passed along Fish Creek in northeast DeKalb County. Park must have been impressed by the rolling, wooded land, because he stopped there again on the way home.

Heading west again in the spring of 1836, Park arrived



to find the future site of Auburn buried under four inches of snow. He slept with his rifle beside him, to the sound of wolves howling almost continually.

Park built himself a shanty, 10-by-12 feet, and cut a road to Pleasant Lake. He brought back a cartload of goods, pulled by oxen, and a milk cow.

That summer Park kept as many as 15 men in a tavern he ran at his shanty. He soon built a bigger, 1½ story cabin, 18-by-20 feet, with a sleeping compartment and a cooking room. When it was done, he returned to Ohio for his wife, Sophia, and his son, Amos. The Parks arrived back in

Auburn on Aug. 6, 1836.

DeKalb County was organized by an act of legislature in late 1836 and Park was appointed sheriff. His cabin served as courthouse, jail, and hotel.

"The lower chamber was the courthouse. Prisoners were kept upstairs. During the sitting of the court, it had to suspend until dinner was cooked. This gave the judge time for a nap," Park wrote in his memoirs.

The Parks co-existed with Miami and Potawatami Indians, who sold them venison, bear meat, turkeys and cranberries.

Park gave a free plot of land to most of the settlers

who came to Auburn in 1837, and he built a saw mill for the growing community.

He helped build the first jail in 1839 and the first courthouse in 1841, moving those functions out of his cabin.

Twenty years later, Park served as captain of his own company in the Civil War.

Sophia Park had died in Auburn in 1856. Wesley Park had two more wives. When the Civil War was over, he and his third wife moved in 1865 to northern Andrew County, Mo., where he founded another Methodist church and school. He died Aug. 11, 1868 from typhoid fever.





## ***Beginnings***

**WESLEY PARK**, his wife, Sophia Park, and a friend, Fannie Smith, were the first three members of Auburn Methodist Church.

They first met in 1839 as a Bible class organized by the Rev. Samuel Reed, who was said to be "a young man of superior talents and energy." He was a missionary preacher for the Logansport District of the Methodist Church.

The first Methodist meeting in the county was not in Auburn, but in 1837 at Orangeville, a pioneer community on the St. Joseph River that today is a ghost town southwest of Newville.

The Orangeville meeting lasted two days, conducted by preachers who came from Maumee, Ohio. After their visit, classes and prayer meetings were held

in cabins in the Orangeville area. More classes were formed in 1838 by visiting circuit preachers.

The exact date of Auburn's first church meeting in 1839 was not recorded. The small church class at Auburn was known as part of the St. Joe Mission. Its first meetings were in Park's cabin on the southeast corner of First and Main streets.

Later that year, on Dec. 21, 1839, Auburn hosted a quarterly conference of the Logansport District. The offering was recorded as \$2.45. Park was elected the circuit steward, and the Rev. Reed became the first preacher formally assigned to what became the Auburn circuit. In those early days, preachers assigned to Auburn served as many as 18 separate congregations.

It was February 1841 before the Auburn church gained its next three members, when James Cosper, his wife, Mary, and his father, David, moved to Auburn.

But by 1844, the Auburn congregation had grown to 42 members. They met in Park's cabin, or at times in a building owned by Park, on the southwest corner of Eighth and Main streets (present site of Auburn City Hardware), in a frame school house, and in the courthouse.

In 1844 the Auburn circuit had 14 classes, with 466 total members, including the 42 at Auburn. The annual offering for the circuit was \$48.25, with \$9.45 given from Auburn.

Auburn's Sunday school in 1845 had six teachers

and 48 students, a group that grew to 60 by 1847.

During a two-month period of 1847, it was reported that Auburn's Sunday scholars had memorized and recited 3,908 verses of scripture and read 5,000 pages of the Bible.

In that same year of 1847, Auburn's 60 members began planning a formal church building to be a home for their congregation.

Wesley and Sophia Park donated the land, and the church was built largely by the Rev. Samuel Lamb, who was a carpenter. Written records said others who helped build the church were Houghton, Brandt, Hoffman (no first names were listed) and James Cospier.

The first Auburn Methodist Church was competed in 1849, at the northwest corner of Seventh and Cedar streets. Thanks to many donations of labor and materials, it cost only \$1,400.

Because the Methodist Church was the community's first and only house of worship, Auburn's Baptist church society and other denominations also used it for meetings.

The land where the first church stood was not deeded to the trustees of the church until 1852. The trustees in that year were J.W. Case, William McDaniel, Michael Kline, Jefferson Wallace and John McCuen, who was the county recorder of deeds.

The Auburn church survived a decline in enthusiasm for churches in 1851. No reason for the lack of interest was recorded, but the local circuit was cut to three classes, the Auburn, Cool and Cooper classes.

The Rev. Milton Hamm, Auburn's pastor in 1852, "was remembered for his change of sentiment and subsequent fearless and eloquent advocacy of the abolition of slavery." According to an old church history, he was a stormy debater on the subject of emancipation.

The slavery question and the resulting Civil War apparently were one reason church membership waned to a faithful few in the 1850s and 1860s.

A church history said, "Rev. C.W. Lynch came in 1862 and remained two years. It is said of him he was an eloquent preacher and in those stirring war times a staunch unionist. Several left the church dissatisfied with the avid loyal utterances of the preacher."

But better times came after the war. In 1870-71, the Rev. A.W. Lamport was the preacher. A church historian wrote that Lamport was "young, ardent, a favorite with the young people. He preached brief, but strong sermons. There was quite a revival during his pastorate."

The church building was threatened by a strong windstorm on Sept. 29, 1872. The winds wrecked

the Odd Fellows lodge, being built on Seventh Street directly west of the church. Its falling walls seriously damaged the west side of the church building, requiring expensive repairs.

In 1874, the church building was moved from the downtown square to the southeast corner of Van Buren and Sixth streets. With the addition of social rooms, it had a seating capacity of about 250 persons.

The parsonage was facing Seventh Street, where the entrance to a new church would stand in the future.

After the building of a new church in 1890, the original Auburn Methodist Church building was sold in 1891. The buyer moved it to the south side of East Ninth Street, about 100 feet east of Cedar Street. It was used as a bicycle store and repair shop until fire destroyed it a few years later.

A bronze tablet was placed on the site of the original church, at Seventh and Cedar streets, to mark the Auburn Methodist Church centennial in 1939. The tablet was later removed and now is stored in the church building.

### **Watch your tongue**

In 1847, the Methodist conference adopted a resolution saying that local brethren speakers should give more attention to their grammar and the dictionary.





## ***The Red Brick Church***

**MONUMENTAL** changes were in store for Auburn's Methodist Episcopal Church as it approached its 50th year.

When the Rev. H.M. Lamport came to Auburn in 1886, the congregation had 208 members and 48 probationary members. But revivals in the winters of 1888-89 and 1889-90 boosted the total member-

ship to 340.

Inspired by its sudden growth, the congregation made ambitious plans for a church that would stand as a monument to their faith.

The new church building was begun in 1890. With a speed that might amaze today's contractors, it was completed for a dedication service on Feb. 22, 1891.

But nothing as big as the

new Auburn First Methodist Church comes into the world smoothly and painlessly.

Church members hotly debated the cost of the new church — which many thought was outrageous — against the need to provide for future growth.

W.P. Harter, an active community merchant, and Anna Robbins, a devoted Sunday school teacher,



**The 1890 church from the northwest, with former parsonage behind**

urged the congregation to take a leap of faith and invest in a large building.

They won the argument, even though many members thought the new brick church they planned was much larger than justified or necessary, according to church historical accounts.

The congregation hired contractor Charles H. Hoffman of Indianapolis to build the Auburn church from the same general plans he used for the Methodist churches of Bluffton and Peru.

Hoffman's price of \$15,000 did not include finishing the basement, the organ, bell, chairs or floor coverings. The total cost of the building and fixtures would be \$20,000.

Although the price sounds small a century later, the average church family's income in 1890 was \$400 to \$500 per year. Three years earlier, financial records showed that the congregation's biggest contributor was pledged to give 75 cents per week to the offering. Many families were giving only two cents per week.

Expert brick masons who built the church were paid 30 cents per hour, and were expected to lay 800-1,000 bricks in a 10-hour day.

Expert carpenters who worked on the church earned 17½ cents per hour, or \$10.50 per week of six 10-hour days. Ordinary laborers made 12½ cents per

hour, or \$7.50 for a 60-hour week.

In the economy of the times, the goal of raising \$20,000 was staggering. But the church had collected \$3,000 by selling the original church site at Seventh and Cedar Street, and that money was used to start the building fund.

The old church was moved from the lot at Seventh and Van Buren into the middle of Sixth Street, so construction could begin.

The parsonage, which faced Seventh Street, was moved also, to the Sixth Street side of the church lot.

The church began to rise, an impressive site with its southwest steeple tower ris-



ing 125 feet in the air. It would be the largest church building in the county.

Its auditorium was 45-by-60 feet, spacious enough to seat 500 worshipers. A lecture room of 25-by-38 would hold an audience of 200 persons. A balcony of 14-by-38 accommodated another 100. Two rooms built for Bible classes and choirs measured 14-by-17 each.

The building's foundations

were Michigan sandstone. Its walls were brick, made by Joe and Herman Groscup at their brickyard a mile west of Auburn.

It was built over a basement, but because of wet soil conditions, the basement floor was only one foot below the original ground level.

Two wood-burning furnaces heated the building. Lights were fueled by an

artificial gasoline gas plant, which had a 500-gallon buried tank.

Its window frames were built at the factory of Zimmerman and Co. on North Indiana Avenue.

As it took shape, visitors from throughout the county marveled at the huge church rising in Auburn.

The congregation had spared no expense. The building boasted an 18-stop pipe organ, built in Salem, Ohio for \$2,500, and a bell that weighed 1,317 pounds and sold for \$300.

Perhaps it should have been no surprise that the congregation struggled to meet its \$20,000 price tag.

On the Saturday night before the dedication, there was no guarantee that the bill could be paid. The congregation still needed pledges for a whopping \$8,500.

The next day's guest speaker was a famous preacher, Dr. Charles H. Payne of New York City. But at an emergency meeting on the night of Feb. 21, 1891, he inspired the congregation in an unexpected way.

According to a church historian, Payne "severely criticized the official members of the church for their recklessness in going so far in debt to build an unnecessarily large church, considering the resources and the financial strength of the society and the community, and tremendous pressure was brought to bear to secure pledges of large amount in sufficient number to assure the success of the next day's meetings."

The extraordinary Saturday night meeting raged on past midnight in a locked room. Mrs. W.P. Harter and



The bell of the 1890 church was preserved

Anna Robbins went to parishioners' homes and woke the startled members to haul them to the meeting, where each was encouraged to make a pledge. The size of the evening's pledges ranged up to \$500, payable in three years. Many members already had paid pledges equal to the second pledges they made on that night.

More than \$12,500 in pledges were made on the weekend of the dedication. They included donations from practically every lodge and similar organization of the town.

On the morning of Feb. 22, 1891, about 1,000 people filled the church to overflowing, with many worshipers standing outside. It was an event for the entire community. The church listed only 291 members on its roster at the time.

The huge gathering sang "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" as the opening hymn. The roster of those attending included some surnames that later would be famous in Auburn's automotive history: Mrs. Alice Zimmerman, Mr. and Mrs. John Zimmerman, Mrs. Martha Kiblinger, and Mr.

and Mrs. J.A. McIntyre

Church leaders saw their dream come true on that day, and none too soon. Anna Robbins died less than two months after the dedication. The Rev. Lamport was killed by a train the next year, and W.P. Harter, who had campaigned to build the church and served on the building committee, died 2½ years later at the age of 37.

Two months later, in April 1891, records showed the congregation had paid \$9,163 on the building, with an unpaid debt of \$9,500. But the indebtedness was paid in full by 1900.

## A direct approach to church finance

In 1887, Auburn Methodist Episcopal Church took a rather public approach to its pledge drive.

A five-member committee decided how much money each member should give to the offering each week — and published the list in a booklet!

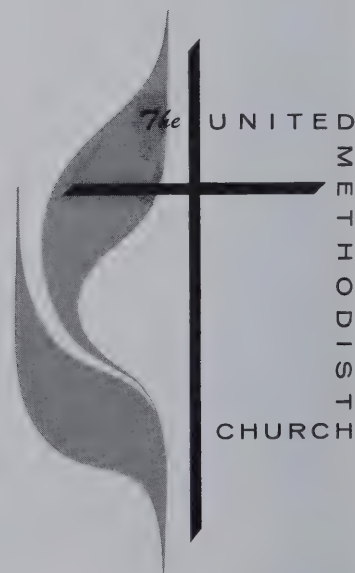
"The undersigned committee appointed to apportion the expenses of this church for the current year after carefully considering the matter have made the following estimates of the amount which, in their opinion, the several members should contribute to meet said expenses," the booklet began.

It urged members to pay on a weekly basis, instead of all at once at the end of the year.

The total budget for the year was \$1,193, including \$800 for the pastor's salary, \$50 for fuel and light, and \$10 for insurance.

Two parishioners, J.B. Casebeer and A. Robbins, were expected to give the enormous sums of 75 cents per week. Next in line were Elias Zimmerman and Solomon Shearer at 50 cents per week. Many members were asked to give only 2 cents, and most pledges were between 10 and 25 cents weekly.

"Should you, however, think the amount asked is more than you can pay, please notify the Treasurer at once," the brochure said.







The 1890 church after the Sunday School wing was added in 1953

## *The New Century*

**THE CONGREGATION** of Auburn's First Methodist Episcopal Church didn't rest on its accomplishments after its feat of building the 1890 church.

The next 60 years brought a continuing series of improvements to the church facilities.

In 1905, a brick home at the corner of Fifth and Van Buren streets was purchased for a parsonage. That enabled the janitor's family to live in the smaller, former parson's house beside the church.

An improvement project in 1912 cost \$5,000. The basement rooms were enlarged and improved, a new steam heating system was installed, walls were re-decorated and linoleum floor covering was laid.

The church interior was redecorated in 1921, and again in 1939 for the 100th birthday of the church.

In 1930, the old parsonage was equipped for children's classrooms and Scout meeting rooms.

For the congregation's centennial in 1939, the church was redecorated, with new carpet on the floor of the auditorium and improvements to the basement social room. The total cost was \$4,500.

The church was again modernized in 1949, with an electronic organ, and Fellowship Hall.

The lecture room behind the main worship area was eliminated and made part of the sanctuary in 1949. A new altar, pulpit and lectern were part of the improve-

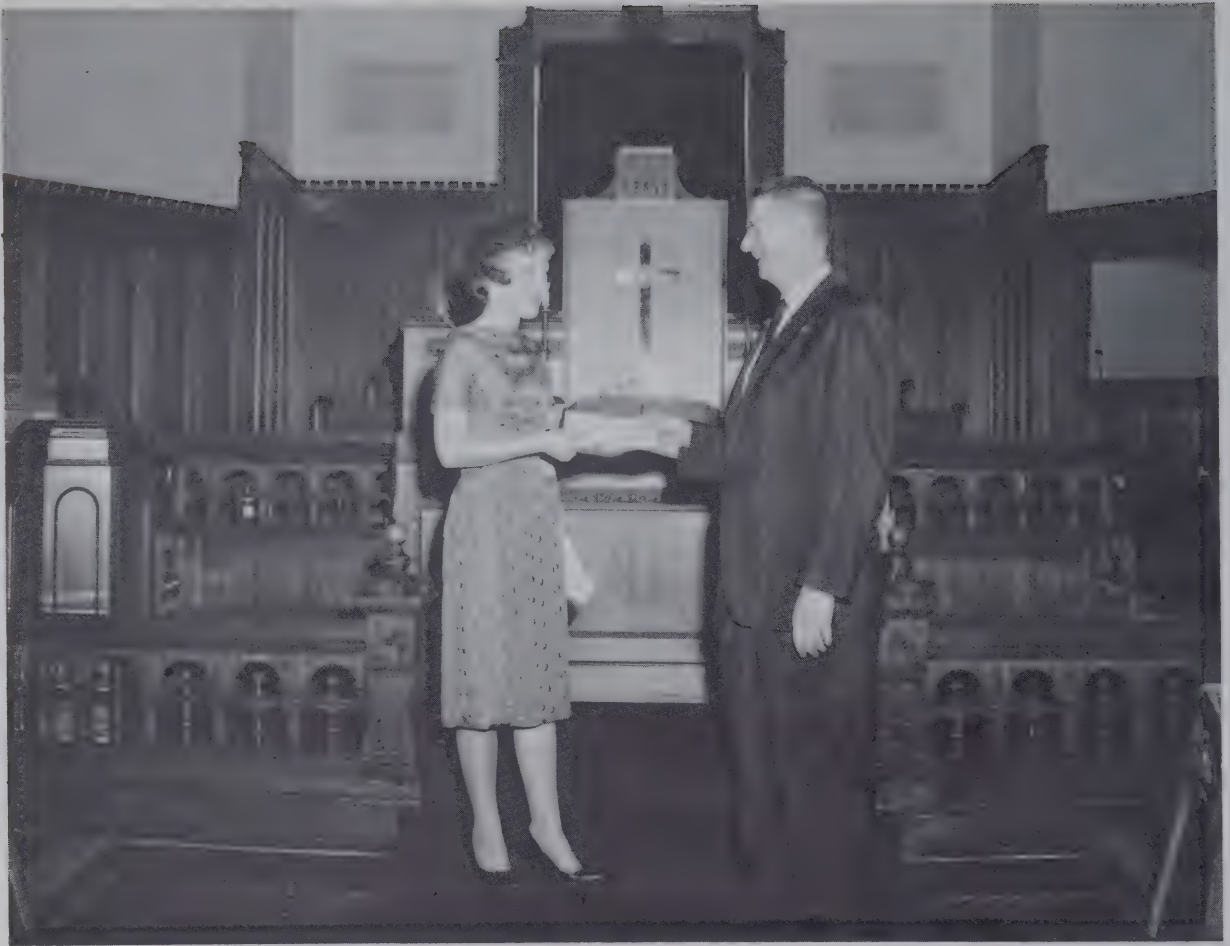
ments. Worship services were conducted in the Assembly Room of the Courthouse during the project.

In 1950, a new parsonage was purchased at the northeast corner of Sixth and Van Buren, directly north of the church..

The old parsonage, or janitor's home, was sold and removed in 1952 to make way for a new wing of children's classrooms. The education wing was built in 1953, facing Sixth Street, at a cost of \$100,000.

The church had been growing in human terms, as well as in brick and mortar.

An overwhelming total of 267 persons were received as full members on Sunday, Feb. 17, 1915, as the result of an evangelistic campaign.



The sanctuary of the 1890 church can be seen in this latter-day photo, as Robert Love presents a church scholarship to Diane Davis (now Manon).



Interior of the Scout Room at the 1890 church

In April of 1915, the Auburn church hosted the meeting of the North Indiana Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. It lasted six days. Some of those attending arrived by the interurban rail line, as well as the three conventional railroads that stopped in Auburn.

In 1919, the Sunday school began supporting a minister in the Ballia district of India. It sent him the money for an automobile in 1922.

But paying the local pastor's salary was sometimes a controversial matter.

The new pastor in 1891 had a salary of \$1,000 per





**The Homebuilders Class of 1939**

year. It was a handsome wage, according to church records of the time, which said the average member's household earned \$400 to \$500 per year.

In 1907 the minister's salary was increased to \$1,300. "This rise in salary created quite a considerable flurry, many declaring it was too much to pay the preacher," a church historian wrote. But in 1915 the pastor's salary was raised to \$2,000.

At its 100th birthday in 1939, the congregation's membership was 854 persons.

But even more rapid growth lie ahead. By 1953, membership was 1,250, and the congregation was straining the seams of the church that was thought to be too large in 1890.



**Stained glass windows from the 1890 church**

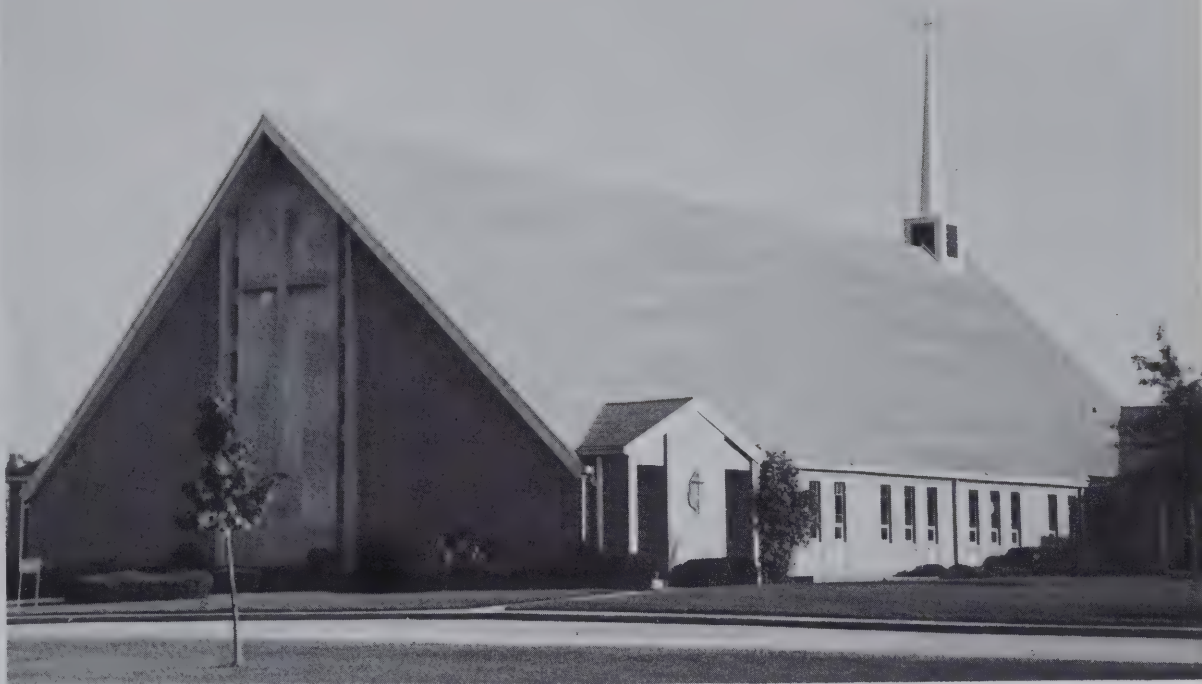


**Wooden arches of the new church in 1970**



**The 1970 church constuction in progress**





## ***A New Church Home***

**BY THE LATE** 1950s, the beautiful house of worship the Auburn Methodists built in 1890 was overcrowded and showing its age.

But almost no one was eager to move to a new church home — or to accept that the red brick jewel at Seventh and Van Buren streets had outlived its usefulness.

A committee was appointed to study the church's need for more space. Its members saw two options: adding more Sunday school rooms to the east side of the church, or building a brand new church.

The committee proposed building a new parsonage, instead. The old parsonage

could be used for Sunday school rooms, while the congregation decided which course to pursue for the long-term future.

"That blew the roof wide open," Jim Brown said of the report by the committee, which he chaired. "Everybody was upset, so we were just at a standstill."

A new church was an idea ahead of its time. Friends said Brown was a target of much personal abuse for even suggesting it.

When a new pastor, the Rev. John Paul Jones, arrived in 1963, he found the congregation still split by differences of opinion over whether or not to build a new church.

It took some diplomacy to get the parishioners to even discuss the idea again, but in 1963 a committee was formed to investigate the need for a new church building.

Paul Souder remembers that A. Mearl Bisel and Dale Treadwell headed the study committee. Souder, a contractor, helped them inspect the 72-year-old structure.

They learned that the building's eaves and soffits were totally rusted out, and the church needed a new roof. While replacing the roof, "They found how really soft the old bricks were," Souder said.

A gap two inches wide was discovered in the building's bell tower steeple. The

limestone foundation also was rotting, with gaps where a man could insert his hand between the stones. "Some people couldn't believe that," Souder said. But it was true.

Reluctantly, the decision to build a new church was made Nov. 24, 1964.

Now the congregation needed a place to move. Only one site was ever really in the running. It was on East Seventh Street, at the city's east edge, smack in the path of its future growth.

Someone already had recognized the land's potential for a church site.

The Fort Wayne District Church Builders had purchased the 6.5-acre lot several years earlier.

But at first the church builders had a different idea of how to use it, Jones said. They were considering a second Methodist church for Auburn, combining some of the smaller rural congregations.

Instead, the first Auburn church bought the property from the church builders in 1965.

"That's a beautiful site. There isn't any nicer site around," said Souder. Besides its location on the city's main east-west street,

it is the highest point in Auburn. The new church's steeple would tower over the surrounding countryside.

A building committee was established in the spring of 1965, and a building fund drive began May 1 of that year.

But a 1965 brochure for the building campaign made it clear that some people still needed to be sold on the project.

"The need is now. Let's acknowledge it," the brochure said. "Are you doubtful? Then invite yourself to the Post-Grad class in the kitchen some Sunday morning...Try teaching for just one Sunday behind thin, drawn walls. Attempt a conference for the library room. Climb the steps with a weakened heart or an arthritic knee."

The building fund's goal was \$600,000, the estimated cost of the church when the project started in 1965.

The estate of Dr. Lewis Geisinger gave the fund a shot in the arm with a gift of nearly \$100,000. Ground was broken May 3, 1970, on what would have been Dr. Geisinger's 95th birthday.

But before the groundbreaking, five long years of planning lay ahead until the new church would start to rise.

The congregation needed a leader. It turned to Chuck Widner, an insurance agent who had moved to Auburn in the late 1950s. He had valuable experience from serving on the building committee for Wallen United Methodist Church, north of Fort Wayne.

"I don't know anything about building," Widner said. "I guess I can coordinate things. So the first thing I



Interior of the new church





**Foundation and basement of the 1970 church**

had to do was surround myself with people who knew something about building."

He tapped Paul Souder, a building contractor, Everett Yoder, a concrete contractor, Brown, who had led the previous building study, and Pastor Wallace Deyo, and called them his steering committee.

The planners' first task was both simple and profound. What should the new church look like?

"We went around and looked at a dozen churches," Souder said. Yoder knew about an especially handsome church in Lima, Ohio, and took the group on a visit there. They liked what they saw.

After their first look at the First Baptist Church in Lima,

the steering committee members returned on a Sunday with half a dozen carloads of parishioners. When the Lima church won their hearts, the congregation hired Helser & Helser architects of Lima, who had designed it.

Helser & Helser's blueprint for Auburn was almost a twin to the Lima church, which was built in 1960. The Auburn church would be larger by a third, but the sanctuaries would be identical in size.

The Auburn congregation wanted a sanctuary with seating for 600 worshipers, including choir areas.

Inside, the front of the Auburn church sanctuary is much different than Lima's church. A committee headed by Mearl Bisel chose sanc-

tuary furniture of dark wood in the classical style of Italy and France.

National officials of the United Methodist Church helped with the interior layout of the building. But most of the decisions were made by Auburn committee members who labored over every detail.

"We formed committees for everything," Brown said. "Those committees were great, because it gave groups of people a responsibility in an area and they really felt a part of it."

The steering committee set target dates for the project, working backward from its plan to have the first service in the new church on Oct. 31, 1971. "We hit that right on the nose," Brown said.

"They were excellent committees. We worked hours and hours," Souder said. The steering committee made some 15 trips to Lima to meet with the architects, often in Souder's private airplane.

Demaris Allison chaired the decorating committee. Chauncey Clem designed the kitchen and paid for a good share of its cost.

When the plans finally were complete, it was time for groundbreaking on May 3, 1970. A caravan of cars paraded down Seventh Street from the old church on the city's west side to the new building site on the east. Worshipers sang "Lead On, O King Eternal" as they gathered around a chalk outline of the new building's foundation. Dozens of shovels surrounded the site, and everyone present took turns using them to spade up the earth.

The new church site allowed for a firmer foundation than the mushy soil under the 1890 church. Souder and Yoder proved that one day when they ruined a drill bit making a soil test.

"That ground is nothing but hard," Souder said. "We went 30 feet and there's absolutely nothing but hard clay."

On that solid ground, contractors began the task of building nearly 40,000 square feet of church on two floors. The old church, even after numerous additions, was only 19,000 square feet.

Bisel was determined to have a church of unmatched beauty. When cost became a concern, it didn't stand in his way. "He wanted what

he wanted, so he just donated it," Souder said, including the quarry tile in the entrances.

Fundraising was easier than Widner had expected. "The vote wasn't all that strong in favor of a new church," he said. In spite of that, "Even the people who were opposed to it in a vote did make pledges.

"We all dug in our pockets. There's no question

about that." The new church cost \$1 million.

People dug in with shovels and rakes, as well. Men of the church installed the parking lot at a savings of \$50,000. Yoder supervised and donated the concrete at his cost.

Marc Cooke wired the dozens of colored lights behind the large three-cross design over the altar, even though he was terminally ill



**Steps to the old church collapsed on July 25, 1971**





**Members of the steering committee break ground in 1970**

with cancer at the time.

To remind them of the old church, parishoners decided to take a part of it with them.

They saved the round "head of Christ" window, which had been added in a 1949 remodeling. It had been in the front of the old church, but in the new church, it would look down on worshipers from a place high on the back wall.

Souder also removed nine round, stained glass windows that were set into the top of the large, arched windows on three sides of the old sanctuary. The window inserts, depicting Bible

themes, became part of the contemporary stained glass windows at the new church.

"There were nine of them, but our church has eight. I broke one," Souder he said. When he broke the bad news to the pastor, Deyo replied, "That's the one we didn't want, anyhow."

Peoples Federal Savings & Loan bought the old church and razed it in February 1972, after allowing two days for members of the congregation to salvage souvenirs from the building.

But the old church already had begun to fall apart in its final days.

The clincher came on July

25, 1971, the day for the cornerstone laying ceremony at the new building. The congregation worshiped in the old church, then drove in a caravan to the east-end site. But just as they were ready to leave the old sanctuary, an usher handed a note to pastor Deyo. It said the crowd couldn't leave by the east steps, because they had collapsed.

"Everybody started laughing and saying, 'I guess we did the right thing,'" Brown recalled.

Souder has no doubts about that. The result of all that hard work and five years of planning was "the

prettiest building around here — externally and internally," he said. Few argued when they flocked to see it.

The congregation chose to have only one service each Sunday when the new church opened. "It was

really a great feeling to have that packed to the gills at each service," Brown said.

Widner still gets a thrill every time he visits the sanctuary. "I can sit there, and I look up and know what's behind those boards," he said. Not just

nails and rafters, but faith and peoples' souls.

"At the time, it seemed like a huge job — just insurmountable," said of the days when the task began. "It did more for me than I ever did for it, I tell you, in the satisfaction it gave me."

### *The next 50 years*

A church building is never really finished. In the years since the new church was completed in 1971, Auburn First United Methodist Church has made many improvements and purchased a new parsonage in east Auburn.

The congregation built a new church shortly after its 50th birthday, and redecorated the building for its 100th anniversary.

The congregation's 150th year will leave its own mark on history. With Sunday school attendance growing rapidly, the church began a project to create more classrooms by remodeling the basement under the sanctuary.

Organizers of the project recalled that the Rev. Wallace Deyo liked to refer to Auburn's church as "the sleeping giant."

In 1989, they said, the giant was starting to awaken.



The head of Christ window has graced two church buildings.





The Rev. Carl Wirey (center) and the Rev. Wallace Deyo lay the cornerstone on July 25, 1971 with assistance from a contractor.

## *Shepherds of the Flock*

### **SAMUEL REED (1816-1869)**

In 1839, Samuel Reed, assisted by Wesley Park, organized a Methodist class in Auburn. The first three members of the church were Wesley Park, Sophia Park and Fannie Smith.

The Rev. Reed was a missionary preacher from the Logansport district at the time. He was described as "a young man of superior talents and energy." It also

was said of him that he could say more in a short period than most. For many years he struggled with some sort of pulmonary affliction, likely the cause of his death. He died in his sleep on Feb. 6, 1869.

### **SAMUEL SMITH**

The Rev. Smith served the Auburn Circuit in 1840. No further records of his life were available.

### **SAMUEL YOUNG**

The Rev. Young served the Auburn Circuit in 1841. No further records of his life were available.

### **ALLEN SKILLMAN**

The Rev. Skillman served the Auburn Circuit in 1842. No further records of his life were available.

**JESSE SPARKS**  
(1807-1895)

The Rev. Sparks, though a preacher of considerable power, often struggled with financial difficulties. At times he worked as a shoemaker to supplement the limited income of a minister. He also purchased farms, improved them, then sold them at a profit.

He served the Auburn Circuit as a minister in 1843. He was married twice and had eight children by his first wife. She died in 1872 and the Rev. Sparks married again in 1873. He died Jan. 5, 1896 of a prolonged, degenerating illness.

**ENOCH J. HOLDSTOCK**  
(1817-1894)

The Rev. Holdstock was born in England and moved with his parents to America when he was eight years old. At 15 he was converted to Methodism while attending a camp meeting. He served the Auburn circuit in 1844.

He died of heart disease on Friday, April 13, 1894. It seems he had more than his share of bad luck that day. He died before medical help could arrive from only a few houses away.

**JAMES SPARR**

The Rev. Sparr served the Auburn Circuit in 1846 and reported the Sabbath school as "progressing in spite of sickness." It had six teachers and 48 students.

**ELIJAH LILLISTON**

The Rev. Lilliston served the Auburn Circuit from the end of 1846 until sometime in 1847, when he relocated.

**WILLIAM J. FORBES**  
(1809-1887)

The Rev. Forbes served the Auburn Circuit in 1847 with Emmanuel Hall as junior minister. He was married twice. He died after a protracted and painful illness on Sept. 4, 1887. Just before he died, a friend asked, "How are you feeling?" to which he replied, "I am floating into heaven."

**EMMANUEL HALL**

The Rev. Hall's first stop in Auburn was as junior pastor in 1847. He returned as Auburn's minister in 1866.

**SAMUEL LAMB**  
(1808-1876)

The Rev. Lamb served the Auburn pastorage in 1848 and 1849. His sermons were described as "plain, evangelical, and instructive." He was not the most exciting minister to serve Auburn, but he supervised the construction of the first church building to serve the Methodists in Auburn. He was a carpenter in addition to being a minister and worked extensively on the project himself. The building's cost was about \$1,400.

**EZRA MAYNARD**  
(1816-1883)

The Rev. Maynard served Auburn in 1849. He had poor health from the time he was 14, and his health forced him to leave the ministry. He worked a small farm after he quit preaching and refused to accept any aid from the church conference. After farming a few years, he opened a small store and was quite successful.

**JOSIAH J. COOPER**  
(1809-1888)

The Rev. Cooper preached for 50 years, including his stop at Auburn in 1850. He was married three times and had 13 children. He died after a stroke of apoplexy.

**JOHN H. PAYTON**  
(1814-1883)

The Rev. Payton served Auburn in 1851. During this time, church attendance showed a marked decline. He never retired from the ministry, preferring work to idleness. His last sermon came the Sunday before his sudden death due to apoplexy.

**MILTON HAMM**

The Rev. Hamm served Auburn in 1852 and is remembered as being a staunch abolitionist.

**JAMES SEWELL**

The Rev. Sewell served at Auburn in 1853. No further details of his life were available.

**JOHN W. WELCH**

The Rev. Welch was pastor at Auburn in 1854 and 1855. He preached on the Sabbath and worked as a carpenter during the week to feed his family.

**ISAAC AYERS**

The Rev. Ayers pastored at Auburn in 1856. No further details of his life were available.

**ELAM S. PRESTON**  
(1821-1906)

The Rev. Preston came from a Quaker family in Pennsylvania. He was converted to Methodism at the age of 14. He was a fanatic



of the temperance movement and sponsored many prohibitionist activities. He was Auburn's pastor in 1857.

### **ISAAC DEAN**

The Rev. Dean came to Auburn in 1858, but was dissatisfied with the post and resigned in less than a year. After his resignation, he moved to a small farm.

### **THOMAS COMSTOCK**

The Rev. Comstock was supplied by the conference to fill the remainder of Dean's commission at Auburn, and remained until 1860.

### **JOHN M. MANN (1831-1881)**

The Rev. Mann served the Auburn Methodists in 1861. That same year he married Henrietta Park, daughter of Wesley Park.

### **CYRUS W. LYNCH**

The Rev. Lynch preached at Auburn in 1862 and 1863. He was a staunch Unionist and was so outspoken on this subject that he caused several people to leave the church.

### **JOHN W. MILLER (1832-1914)**

The Rev. Miller was born in Ohio to a non-Methodist family, but was allowed to attend a Methodist Sunday school. He served Auburn in 1864 and spent the last years of his life in the Methodist Memorial Home for the Aged.

### **CORNELIUS HOOVER**

The Rev. Hoover served at Auburn in 1865. No further details of his life were available.

### **EMMANUEL HALL (1824-1880)**

After serving at Auburn as a junior minister in 1847, the Rev. Hall returned as senior minister in 1866 and 1867. Before becoming a minister, he had learned the trade of cabinetmaker. In 1848, he married Rosannah Lampport, daughter of the Rev. A.M. Lampport, who was pastor at Auburn three years after the Rev. Hall.

### **WILLIAM COMSTOCK (1832-1875)**

The Rev. Comstock served at Auburn in 1868, 1869 and part of 1870. He was the brother of the Rev. Thomas Comstock, who was pastor at Auburn from 1858-60. William Comstock left Auburn in 1870 on an elder's orders. Soon after, he retired because of failing health and died of tuberculosis.

### **ALMERON W. LAMPORT**

The Rev. Lamport served Auburn in 1870 and 1871. He was a young man, very popular with the youth of the church. His sermons were described as "brief and stirring." Church membership rose considerably during his pastorate.

### **ALBERT CONE (1832-1905)**

The Rev. Cone pastored at Auburn in 1872 and 1873. He was a school teacher before entering the ministry. He directed the building of the first Methodist church in Angola. He died of complications after surgery.

### **JOHN W. WELCH (1823-1917)**

The Rev. Welch returned to Auburn after nearly 20

years' absence. He first served at Auburn in 1854-55, and was pastor again in 1874-75.

By the time of his return, he no longer had to work as a carpenter to make ends meet, and he devoted his time to strengthening the financial standing of the church.

In addition to being a carpenter, he was a scholar. He began to study Greek at the age of 60.

The "History of the North Indiana Conference" considers him to have been one of the greatest ministers in the state. He died at the age of 93.

### **JOSHUA EVIN ERVIN (1840-1917)**

The Rev. Ervin served Auburn from 1876-78, during which time the church did not seem to make any advance. He was, however, a relatively popular pastor, as several children would be named after him following any of his varied church assignments.

### **H.J. NORRIS (1846-1916)**

The Rev. Norris spent his adolescence during the Civil War. He wanted to be a Union soldier as his brothers were, but frail health prevented his acceptance. Instead of becoming a soldier, he served in the Pioneer Corps building roads, bridges, etc. He served Auburn from 1879-81, and was sorely missed when he left.

### **WILLIAM HENRY DANIEL (1848-1908)**

Before joining the ministry, the Rev. Daniel

learned a miller's trade from an uncle. He came to Auburn in 1882 and served only one year. He was very well loved by the parishioners, and everyone was so certain of his return that the Auburn church did not petition for it. However, a church in Peru that he had served earlier did petition for his reassignment. The petition held 300 names, and the Rev. Daniel was transferred. The Auburn congregation was overcome with sorrow.

### **CHESTER W. CHURCH (1850-1912)**

Before becoming a minister, Rev. Church was a teacher, and by the time he was 22 years old, he was the superintendent of Huntington schools. He served the Auburn pastorate in 1883, 1884 and part of 1885. Serious illness caused his resignation from the conference in 1885. After he recovered, he worked for a time as a traveling salesman.

### **C.L. CLIPPENGER**

For the remainder of 1885, the Rev. Clippenger filled the vacancy left by the Rev. Church's illness.

### **HORTENSIVS M. LAMPOR (1849-1892)**

The Rev. Lamport served at Auburn from 1886-90, the longest tenure of any pastor in the 19th Century.

During his five-year term, church membership doubled, and the church building of 1890 was begun.

The Rev. Lamport also formed the Young Peoples Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, a forerunner of the Epworth

League and Methodist Youth Fellowship.

Thirteen months after the dedication of the new church and the Rev. Lamport's departure, the pastor and his brother-in-law were walking along a section of railroad tracks toward the Kendallville station when they were stricken by a sidetracked train and killed.

### **ANDREW S. WOOTON (1849-1922)**

Before becoming a minister, the Rev. Wooton was an expert brick mason, and later a building contractor. He served at Auburn from 1891-94. His wife, Martha, died while he was pastor at Auburn, causing a great deal of grief throughout the congregation.

### **JACOB K. WALT (1846-1919)**

The Rev. Walts served Auburn from 1895-97. Before becoming a minister, he was a teacher, a high school principal, and simultaneously the superintendent of two school districts. He also worked extensively with the YMCA at Albany, at one point serving as its president. He later worked in the Jeffersonville Prison, teaching the gospel to convicts.

### **THOMAS GUILD (1854-1941)**

The Rev. Guild served Auburn from 1897-1900. In 1900, the debt for the 1890 church was paid in full. The Rev. Guild was described as an unusually good preacher. He held the degree of Doctor of Divinity from DePauw University.

### **LEROY KRIDER (1855-1934)**

The Rev. Krider received

his first preaching license from the Rev. J.W. Welch, who had served Auburn in 1874-75. Krider served Auburn from 1901-04 and liked the people so much that when he retired in 1921, after a nervous breakdown, he moved back to Auburn to live.

### **MADISON A. HARLAN (1850-1922)**

The Rev. Harlan served Auburn from 1905-07. When he came to Auburn, negotiations were pending on the purchase of a new parsonage and all of the Harlan family's personal effects had to be held in Grand Central Station in New York until the transaction was complete.

### **WILLIAM B. FREELAND (1871-1958)**

The Rev. Freeland served Auburn from 1907-1909. At this time, the pastor's salary was increased to \$1,300 a year. The congregation was incensed that the pastor should be paid such an outrageous salary. In 1958, the Rev. Freeland fell while visiting some friends in the Methodist Memorial Home and suffered a broken hip. He died a few days later.

### **FRED F. THORNBURG**

The Rev. Thornburg served Auburn from 1910-16, the longest term for any pastor to that date. Since then, only the Rev. Wallace Deyo and the Rev. Wilbur Yates have served as long.

In 1912, extensive improvements were undertaken, costing the church about \$5,000. In 1915, the North Indiana Conference met in the Auburn church. Membership at that time was up to 827.



**FREELAND A. HALL  
(1876-1962)**

The Rev. Hall received his Doctor of Divinity degree from Evansville University. He served Auburn from 1916-19. He went on to become superintendent of the Logansport, Kokomo and Richmond districts, and was a leading developer of Epworth Forest and the Epworth League. When he retired from the ministry, he worked with his brother in selling real estate.

**HARLEY OVERDEER  
(1876-1958)**

Until 1905, the Rev. Overdeer was a high school teacher. In 1905, he entered the ministry, and in 1919 and 1920, he served the Auburn Methodists. His wife died at the parsonage in 1920 after a brief illness.

**EDWARD E. TRIPPEER**

The Rev. Tripppeer preached with the style of an evangelist, and during his service at Auburn (1921-24) church attendance and membership grew. The interior of the church was redecorated again, and again it cost about \$5,000.

**GEORGE HUBBART  
(1882-1956)**

The Rev. Hubbard was a high-school dropout, but he returned to school when he felt a call to the ministry. He graduated in 1906, and in 1906 he became the first pastor to Riverside Park Methodist Church in Indianapolis. In 1906, he also entered DePauw University, and graduated from there in 1910.

He came to Auburn in 1925 and remained until 1928. In 1927 the church

received a trust fund in the names of James and Cora Sheffer, church leaders who had been murdered. It was considered the worst tragedy in the congregation's history.

The Rev. Hubbard retired to the Memorial Home in 1953.

**ERNEST J.  
WICKERSHAM  
(1887-1953)**

The Rev. Wickersham studied at Ball Teachers' College in Muncie, Ind. and the State Teachers' College in Terre Haute. He taught for three years in the Albany area before becoming a minister. His appointments usually were long ones, and he remained in Auburn from 1929-33. While in Anderson, he directed the building of both a new church and parsonage. In 1951, he was stricken ill while in the pulpit, and remained an invalid until his death in 1953. His wife, May, lived to the age of 93.

**MANFRED C. WRIGHT  
(1876-1954)**

The Rev. Wright graduated with Phi Beta Kappa honors from DePauw in 1904, and studied at Boston University for some time after. He served Auburn from 1934-37. In June of 1937, he married his second wife, Alice. In 1930, he received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from DePauw.

**CLAUDE GARRISON**

The Rev. Garrison served the Auburn pastorate from 1938-41. In 1939, the 100th anniversary of the church was celebrated. Needed repairs and redecorating were done in 1938.

**HARRY A.P. HOMER  
(1883-1950)**

The Rev. Homer served Auburn in 1942-43. During his service at Auburn, he underwent major surgery at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. In 1948, he retired due to poor health and moved to Florida and then Iowa. His health failed steadily until his death in 1950.

**VAN WEER HINCKLEY  
(1904-1962)**

The Rev. Hinckley decided to become a minister while at an Epworth League Institute in Battle Ground, Ind. He held two jobs for some time to be able to pay for school. He then studied at DePauw, Chicago Theological Seminary, and Boston University. While attending school, he served several pastorates in southern Indiana and one in New Hampshire. He served Auburn from 1944-48. He died of a heart attack while clearing snow away from his car.

**CLARENCE C. COLLINS**

The Rev. Collins served Auburn from 1949-54. In 1932 he was married to Mrs. Collins by the Rev. Lowell Wilson, a cousin of President Woodrow Wilson.

**ALBERT L. CLARKE**

The Rev. Clarke served Auburn from 1955-60. Following his service in Auburn, he was appointed to be the minister at the Memorial Home in Warren. He preached in Warren until he retired in 1973.

**CARL BLICKENDORF**

The Rev. Blickendorf served Auburn as associate

pastor in 1957-58. In 1960, he left the ministry and now practices dentistry in Fort Wayne.

### **WILLARD J. DOYLE (1917-1984)**

The Rev. Doyle served Auburn from 1960-62. After this time he worked extensively with both the North and South Indiana Conferences, acting as a secretary, a member of the Board of Ministry, and as district superintendent in New Castle. He died an hour after suffering a heart attack while Christmas shopping in Chicago.

### **JOHN PAUL JONES**

The Rev. Jones served the Auburn pastorate in 1963-64, during a time when the congregation was deciding to build a new church.

He now serves as pastor at High Street United Methodist Church in Muncie.

### **CARL O. WIREY (1898-1984)**

The Rev. Wirey graduated from Boston University School of Theology in 1935, and served several charges in the South Indiana Conference until 1942. In 1942, he began 4½ years as a chaplain in the European theater of World War II. He had served as a private in World War I. After his retirement, he was made associate pastor in Auburn in 1965, and was later named pastor emeritus. For 13 years he served as chaplain at DeKalb Memorial Hospital.

### **WALLACE W. DEYO**

The Rev. Deyo held his first pastorate as a sophomore at Taylor University.

He went on to study in New York, and he held pastorates throughout his studies. He came to Auburn in 1965 and remained until he retired in 1971. During his term in Auburn, the present church building was planned and constructed. In 1971 he announced his retirement from the conference, and he left Auburn to return to Wabash, Ind., where he had been pastor in the 1950s.

### **LESTER L. TAYLOR**

The Rev. Taylor served Auburn as an associate pastor in 1966-67.

### **STANLEY L. TOBIAS (1935-1984)**

The Rev. Tobias served as associate pastor to Auburn from 1968-71. He had to cope with tragedy throughout his life. His mother died when he was two years old. At age three, he left his father in Colorado to live with an aunt in Indiana. He later moved to an uncle's home until he was reunited with his father at age seven.

He graduated from Markle High School in 1953, and entered Taylor University. During his first week at Taylor, his father died of cancer. In 1958 he married Doris (Hefelfinger) and in 1978 he lost her to cancer. Nine months after Doris's death, he discovered that he had lymphoma. He remarried in 1980, and although he at first responded well to treatment, he had a recurrence in 1983 and died in Houston at the University of Texas Hospital on July 28, 1984.

### **AUGUST LUNDQUIST**

The Rev. Lundquist served at Auburn from 1972-76. He began his ministry in

1955 at Twelve Mile, near Logansport, Ind. He attended Manchester College, and Asbury College in Kentucky, and Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis.

During his term at Auburn, the church began weekly radio broadcasts of Sunday morning services, and began the Lovelight Puppets ministry under the direction of Bob and Betty Carbaugh.

The church also started its nursery school while he was pastor, and offered its classrooms to the Preschool for Handicapped Children. The church hosted the preschool free of charge until it opened its own building in 1988.

Since leaving Auburn, the Rev. Lundquist has been pastor at Alexandria, Farm-land, and New Hope church in Marion. Two of his daughters, Nita Webb and Susi Webb, remain in Auburn.

### **RICHARD CAMPTON**

Auburn was the second pastoral assignment for the Rev. Campton, who served as assistant pastor here in the early 1970s. His father also was a minister in the North Indiana Conference. The Rev. Campton worked with youth at Auburn. He moved to Florida after leaving here.

### **JOHN DICKEN**

The Rev. John Dicken began preaching when he was a sophomore in college. He rode his bicycle to the first two churches he served, Cammack and Mount Olive, near Muncie.

After graduating from Boston School of Theology,



he became pastor of Hamilton and Alvarado churches in Steuben County.

On his first visit to Auburn in 1958, he was pastor of four rural congregations, Meese Chapel, Concord, Norris Chapel and the former Rehoboth church.

He returned to First Auburn church in 1976 and remained as pastor until 1981. During his term the church worked to retire its debt on the 1970 building. He also encouraged unified activities by the many United Methodist congregations in DeKalb County. One such activity was a booth sponsored by all the churches at the annual county fair.

The Rev. Dicken left Auburn to become Superintendent of the Kokomo district for six years. He now is pastor at Waynedale church on Fort Wayne's south side.

### MEL SEEGER

The Rev. Mel Seeger served the Auburn church for a few weeks between the departure of John Dicken and the arrival of J. Wilbur Yates. The Rev. Seeger was ill at the time, and died Feb. 12 in Louisville, Ky.

### WILBUR YATES

The Rev. Yates entered the ministry as a student pastor in 1952.

He was raised in Taylorsville, Ky., near Louisville, and attended Asbury College in Wilmore, Ky. and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

He served as a pastor in Kentucky for 13 years, then came to the North Indiana Conference in 1965. He served two years at Waynedale, 14½ years at LaGrange, and 1981-88 at Auburn.

He left Auburn to become district superintendent for the Huntington District.

During his term as pastor, the church restored the positions of associate pastor, and full-time Christian education director to the staff. The congregation hosted the bishop for a ceremony to burn the mortgage for the 1970 church building.

"We tried to lay the foundation for church growth," the Rev. Yates said. "I sensed a change of spirit within the life of the church, from an inward to an outward vision. I sensed that we developed a new spirit among ourselves while we were there."

### GARY EVANS

The Rev. Evans served as associate pastor from 1984-88. He was a native of LaPorte, Ind. and a graduate of Oral Roberts University and Oral Roberts School of Theology.

He was noted for his "sermons in song." He had a deep interest in counseling and family ministries. He left Auburn to study for his doctorate in family ministries at Fuller Theological Seminary in California.

### KEN WALKER

The Rev. Walker came to Auburn in May 1988, immediately after graduating from Asbury Seminary in Wilmore, Ky. He is 28 years old and serving his first church assignment. He was raised in Stockwell, Ind. near Lafayette., and attended Indiana State University at Terre Haute.

While at Auburn he has begun a singles ministry, "One Accord." He also has concentrated on missions, evangelism, social concerns, and the United Methodist Men organization.

### DOUGLAS ANDERSON

The Rev. Anderson came to Auburn in late 1988, as one of the youngest senior pastors at Auburn in many years.

He began his ministry at a young age, serving as an assistant pastor at Plymouth, Ind. when he was only 18 years old.

He was raised in North Liberty, Ind. He attended Butler University, Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, and Drew University, a United Methodist seminary in New Jersey.



A youth choir in the 1950s



The Scout troop had seven Eagle Scouts at one time in 1942

## Organizations

### YOUTH MINISTRY

The church Young Peoples' Society was organized around 1890. It affiliated with the Epworth League when it was formed as a national organization in mid 1890s. It later became Methodist Youth Fellowship, and finally UMYF.

\* \* \*

The Rev. Fred F. Thornburg was the Scoutmaster for the first Boy Scout troop in Auburn, organized in 1912.

Scouting reorganized in Jan. 1939 with Don Winegardner as Scoutmaster and Lyston Searfoss as assistant. Again it was the first troop in Auburn. Eleven boys were charter members.

Scouts were housed in a new building, next to the children's building — had one room with a large fireplace, built for \$878 by men of the church.

The first Boy Scout troop was followed by church-sponsored organizations of Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts and Brownies. late 1890s.

\* \* \*

The Auburn church tradition of using high school boys as ushers began in 1937, when Quentin Mavis became the head usher. Mr. Mavis trained and directed the ushers for more than 20 years.

\* \* \*

In 1943, high school groups in the church planned a worship service from 11 p.m. to midnight on Christmas Eve. This began a continuing tradition of Christmas Eve services ending at midnight.

In another continuing tradition, church youth have been responsible for planning the Easter Sunrise service.

### ADULT ORGANIZATIONS

Women's groups merged into the Women's Society of Christian Service in 1940, with 71 charter members.

All-day meetings were held during World War II years, with sewing activities, Red Cross and overseas relief work.

Traditional activities were a May breakfast, and a mother-daughter banquet with the dinner cooked and served by men of the church.

In 1956 the Madonna circle was founded as an organization for young mothers with preschool children.

\* \* \*

The Methodist Men's Club was founded in 1953 and after a lapse of inactivity, is once again strong today.

\* \* \*



In the 1950s and 1960s, the "Major Leaguers" was an organization of older church members who gathered for games, devotions and light refreshments.

A strong adult choir has been a long tradition in the Auburn church.

According to historical records, in 1956 the adult choir had some 30 members, ranging in age from 16 to 90. Its director was the widely respected Don Wilson.

The choir frequently traveled to other cities to sing a full evening's program, and twice sang for Northern Indiana Conference sessions. Its annual full service Christmas concert was traditionally presented two Sundays before Christmas.

In the 1970s and 1980s, a 45-minute musical program on Christmas eve has been the highlight of the choir's year.



**Dick and Edith Schisler serve as our missionaries to Brazil. The Auburn church began supporting the Schisler family in 1952, in conjunction with other churches.**

## How recent pastors see us

"It's always had tremendous potential, but the problem has been getting everybody to go in the same direction and see the vision. I think they're beginning to see a bit of it now."

— *The Rev. August Lundquist*

"I saw the Auburn church as a major congregation in DeKalb County that had a leadership role to play. I saw it as a flagship church for United Methodism in DeKalb County."

— *The Rev. John Dicken*

"I see the Auburn church as emerging to become one of the best churches in the Fort Wayne district, and possibly in the conference. I think it has a lot of things going for it, location, committed people, facility, and, I hope, the will."

—*The Rev. Wilbur Yates*

"There's a sense that being a member of the church means being involved in the ministry of Christ, rather than just attending worship. That's what I appreciate."

—*The Rev. Douglas Anderson*





Members of the new church building committee gathered in the Scout Room of the old church.

## The church builders of 1890-91 and 1970-71

### 1890-91 Building

In 1890 the trustees were Michael Boland, W.P. Harter, Albert Robbins, Elias Zimmerman. Other officers were Dr. J.B. Casebeer, E.L. Casebeer, Geo. S. McCord, J.H. Rowland, M.B. Willis, John Weaver, and S.J. Zimmerman.

The 1890 building committee members were Albert Robbins, Michael Boland, W.P. Harter, Elias Zimmerman, and the Rev. H.M. Lamport.

C.M. Merica, the county school superintendent, served as the superintendent of the Sunday school. Anna Robbins taught the primary and junior Sunday school. Mrs. J.B. Casebeer was president of the Ladies Aid Society.

### 1970-71 Building

Trustees in 1970 were Russel Tague, chairman; Mrs. Arthur Snider, secretary; Argyl Basset, Robert Paulen, Clarren Boger, Cortland Frederick, Ora Hagerty, Robert Parker, and Mrs. Robert Glass.

Trustees in 1971 were Maurice Greuter, president; Robert Parker, vice president; Mrs. Robert Bender, secretary; Mrs. Robert Glass, Clarren Boger, Ora Hagerty, Courtland Frederick, Charles Bassett and Richard Bundy.

The building committee was Charles Widner, chairman; James E. Brown, vice chairman; Paul Souder, Everett Yoder, Roger Wertenberger, Mrs. Vincent Clemens, William Quance, Max Grogg, Chauncey

Clem, Mrs. Paul Souder, Maurice Greuter, Mrs. Howard Rohm, Mearl Bisel, Theo Webb, Howard McDaniel, Kenneth Allison, Lawrence Wible, Robert Dove, Clarren Boger, Mrs. Charles Welch, Mrs. Clarren Boger, Mrs. Robert Parker, Mrs. Gene Simanton, Mrs. Kenneth Allison, and Kelso Davis.

Ex-officio members were the Rev. Wallace Deyo, the Rev. Stanley E. Tobias, Mrs. James E. Brown, Mrs. Eldon Hardy, Eugene Stebing, Donald Friend, Ray Shuttleworth, Robert Carbaugh Jr., Mrs. Correll Simanton, Mrs. Leonard Clark, George Rodecap, chairman of the administrative board; Charles Bassett, and the trustees.



Finance committee members were Lawrence Wible, chairman; James E. Brown, Theo Webb, Vincent Clemens, Robert Glass, Mrs. Walter Shutt, Chauncey Clem, Jack Brand, Mrs. Orval Bair, Norman Rohm, Paul Souder and Richard Simanton.

Other officers for the project were: crusade general chairman — Theo Webb; visitation chairman — Lawrence Wible; leadership gifts chairman — Clarren Boger; building committee chairman — Charles Widner.

Architects were Helser & Helser, Lima, Ohio. The

general contractor was Furman Steury Associates. The plumbing and heating contractor was Pearson Inc. The electrical contractor was Hattersley & Sons Inc. Furnishings were by Sauder Manufacturing Co. of Archbold, Ohio.



Christian education has always been an emphasis at the Auburn church. These girls posed outside the 1890 church. The date and occasion are unknown.



### **A. Mearl Bisel (1902-1986)**

This history is dedicated to A. Mearl Bisel, who diligently saved many of the photographs and records used in making this book.

Mr. Bisel also served as chairman of the sanctuary and chapel committee, which chose materials, carpet, and furnishings for the worship areas of the present church.

He also was active in preserving Auburn's secular history, and was perhaps the single most generous benefactor of the Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg Museum. He is shown with a 1910 Auburn automobile that he purchased for display in the museum.

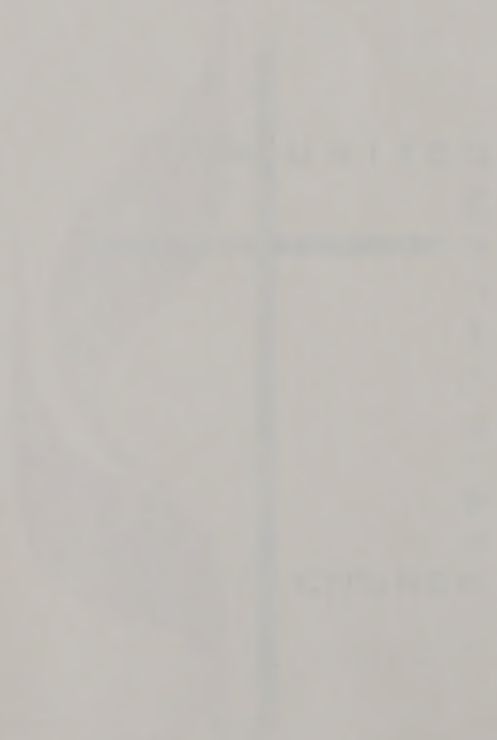
















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